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His Majesties

P A P E R

Containing severall Questions propounded to the

Commissioners Divines

Touching

Episcopacy.

With an humble Answer returned to his Majesty
by Mr. Marshall, Mr. Vines, Mr. Carill, and Mr. Seaman
4. October 1648.

Published by Authority.



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P A P E R

Containing several of the most important

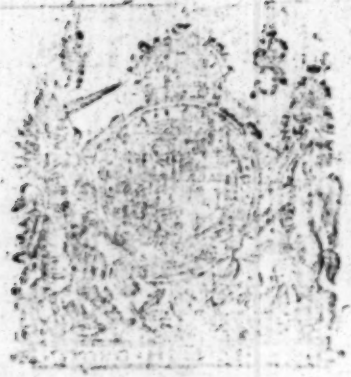
Commissioners Divines

Touching

Episcopacy.

With an Appendix containing the
Answers of the Commissioners to the
Queries of the House of Commons
in the Year 1689.

Printed by J. Sturges.



London: Printed by J. Sturges, 1689.

SIR:



Have received your Letter of the 28. of September, for which I give you many thanks, and to satisfie you that the Treary goeth on; I have sent you what hath passed here of late, which is as followeth: Upon occasion of debate upon the Proposition of the Church, in which his Majesty makes divers scruples of Conscience, there was a concession that our Ministers, (that is, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Vines, Mr. Carill, and Mr. Seaman) should attend his Majesty, to remove such objections as he should please to make, and accordingly on Munday morning they waited on his Majesty, to whom the King delivered these inclosed Questions; whereunto they have returned this Answer now also sent. These Propositions of the Church are still under debate, and will take up this weeke or more in the consideration of them: which being once granted (as some are of opinion they will be) we may thereby hope for a very speedy consent to all the rest. Commend me to all my friends, whose names I purposely omit, and rest

Yours to Command:

Newport in the Isle
of Wight, 4. of
October, 1648.

W. M.

Charles R.



Conceive that Episcopall Government is most consonant to the Word of God, and of an Apostolicall institution, as it appears by the Scripture, to have been practised by Apostles themselves, and by them committed, and derived to particular persons as their Substitutes or Successors therein (as for ordaining Presbyters and Deacons, giving rules concerning Christian Discipline, and exercising Censures over Presbyters and others) and hath ever since to these last times been exercised by Bishops in all the Churches of Christ, and therefore I cannot in Conscience consent to abolish the said Government; notwithstanding this my perswasion I shall be glad to be informed, if our Saviour and the Apostles did so leave the Church at liberty, as they might totally alter or change the Church Government at their pleasure; which if you can make appear to me, then I will confesse that one of my great Scruples is cleane taken away: And then there only remaines;

That being by my Coronation Oath obliged to maintaine Episcopall Government, as I found it sealed to my hands: whither I may consent to the abolishing thereof untill the same shall be evidenced to me to be contrary to the Word of God.

Newport, 2. Octob. 1648.

(3)
An humble Answer returned to your Majesties Paper delivered to us, Octob. 2. 1648.

May it please Your Majesty:



WE do fully agree without hesitation, That the Scriptures cited in the margent of your Paper, *Acts* 14. 23. *Acts* 6. 6. *1 Cor.* 16. 1. *1 Cor.* 14. 1 *Cor.* 5. 3. *3 John* 9. 10. do prove, That the Apostles did ordaine Presbyters and Deacons, give rules concerning Christian Discipline, and had power of exercising censures over Presbyters and others: and that these places of Scripture, *1 Tim.* 5. 22. *Titus* 1. 5. *1 Tim.* 5. 19. *Titus* 3. 10. do prove, That *Timothy* and *Titus* had power to ordaine Presbyters and Deacons, and to exercise Censures over others; and that the second and third Chapters of the *Revelation* do prove, That the Angels of the Churches had power of governing of the Churches, and exercising Censures: But that either the Apostles, or *Timothy* and *Titus*, or the Angels of the Churches were Bishops, as Bishops are distinct from Presbyters, exercising Episcopall Government in that sense; or that the Apostles did commit and devolve to any particular persons as their substitutes and Successors, any such Episcopall Government; or that this is proved in the least measure by the Scriptures alleadged, we do as fully deny: And therefore do humbly deny also, That Episcopall Government is therefore most consonant to the Word of God, and of Apostolicall institution, or proved so to be by these Scriptures. None of these were Bishops, or practised Episcopall Government, as Bishops are distinct from Presbyterie; neither is such an Officer of the Church as a Bishop distinct from a Presbyter, to be found in the new Testament (by which we humbly conceive, That our faith and conscience touching this point ought to be concluded: The Name, Office, and worke of Bishop and Presbyter being one and the same in all things, and never in the least distinguished, as is cleereley evident, *Tit.* 1. 5. 7. For this cause lest I, thee in Creete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordaine Presbyters in every City, as I had appointed thee, for a Bishop must be blamelesse. In which place the Apostles reasoning were altogether invalid and inconsequent, if Presbyter and

(4)
Bishop were not the same Office, as well as they have the same name.

The same is manifest, *Act. 20. 17. 28.* And from *Miletus* he sent to *Ephesus*, and called the Presbyters of the Church, to whom he gave this charge, *vers. 28.* Take heed therefore unto your selves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you Bishops; to feed and governe the Church of God: Where we observe, That the Apostle being to leave these Presbyters, and never to see their faces more, *vers. 38.* doth charge them with the feeding and governing of the Church, as being Bishops, and the Holy Ghosts making. But that the Holy Ghost did make any superiour or higher kinde of Bishops than these common Presbyters, is not to be found in that, or any other Text.

And that under the mouth of two or three witnesses this assertion of ours may stand; we adde to what we have already said, That in the first of *Peter. 2. 1. 2.* The Presbyters which are among you, I exhort, who are also a Presbyter, feed the flock of God which is among you. Performing the Office of Bishops. Where it appeares plaine to us, That under the words used in this place, is exprest whatsoever worke the Presbyters do, more for the Government or good of the Church, otherwise than is there expressly enjoyned unto Presbyters. By all which that hath been said, The point is rendered most cleare to the judgement of most men, both ancient and of latter times; That there is no such Officer to be found in the Scriptures of the new Testament, as a Bishop distinct from a Presbyter: Neither doth the Scripture afford us the least notice of any qualification required in a Bishop, that is not required in a Presbyter; nor any Ordination to the Office of a Bishop, distinct from a Presbyter; nor any worke or duty charged upon a Bishop, which Presbyters are not enjoyned to do; nor any greater honour or dignity put upon them. For that double honour which the Apostles speake of, *1 Tim. 5. 17.* As due to Presbyters that rule well, is with a note of especially affixed to that act or worke of labouring in the Word of Doctrine; which is not that act wherein Bishops have challenged a singularity or peculiar eminency above the Presbyter.

To that which your Majesty doth conceive, That Episcopall Government was practised by Apostles themselves; We humbly

65
My answer, That the Apostles, as they were the highest officers of the Church of Christ, so they were Extraordinarie in respect of their Commission and gifts, and office, and distinguished from all other officers, 1 Cor. 12. 28. God hath set some in the Church; First Apostles, Secondly Prophets, Thirdly Teachers. Ephesians. 4. 11. Christ gave some Apostle, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors, and some Teachers; Whereby the Apostles are distinguished from Pastors, and Teachers who are the ordinary Officers of the Church for Preaching the word, and Government: that they had power and authority to ordaine Church-Officers, and to exercise censures in all Churches we affirme, and withall, that no other Persons or Officers of the Church may challenge or assume to themselves such power in that respect alone, because the Apostles practised it, except such power belong unto them in common, as well as to the Apostles, by warrant of the Scripture, for that Government which they practised was Apostolicall, according to that peculiar Commission and Authority, which they had, and no otherwise to be called Episcopall; then, as their Office was so comprehensive as they had power to doe the worke of any, or all other Church-Officers; In which respect they call themselves *Presbyteri*, *Deaconi*, (but never *Episcopi* in distinct fence) and therefore we humbly crave leave to say, That to argue the Apostles to have practised Episcopall Government, because they ordained other Officers, and exercised censures, is, as if we should argue a Justice of Peace to be a Constable, because he doth that which a Constable doth in some particulars. Its manifest that the Office of Bishops and Presbyters were not distinct in the Apostles, they did not Act as Bishops in some Acts, and as Presbyters in other Acts; The distinction of Presbyters and Bishops being made by men in after times.

And whereas your Majesty doth conceive, That the Episcopall Government, was by the Apostles committed and delivered to particular persons, as their Substitutes or Successors therein (as for ordaining Presbyters and Deacons, giving rules concerning Christian Discipline, and exercising censures over Presbyters and others) seeming by the alleadged places of Scriptures to instance in *Timothy* and *Titus*, and the Angels of the Churches. We humbly answer, And

And first to that of *Timothy* and *Titus*, we grant, That *Timothy* and *Titus* had authority and power of ordaining Presbyters and Deacons, and of exercising censures over Presbyters and others, though we cannot say they had this power as the Apostles Substitutes or Successors in Episcopall Government; nor that they exercised the power they had, as being Bishops in the sence of your Majestic, but as extraordinary Officers or Evangelists, which Evangelists were an Office in the Church, distinct from Pastors and Teachers, *Ephesians* 4. 11. And that they were Evangelists, it appears by their being sent up and downe by the Apostles, or taken along with them in company to severall Churches, as the necessity and occasion of the Church did require; the one of them being expressly called an Evangelist, *2 Tim.* 4. 5. And neither of them being any where in Scriptures called Bishop, neither were they fix'd to *Ephesus* and *Crete*, as Bishops in the Churches committed to them, but removed from thence to other places, and never, for ought, appears in Scriptures, returned to them againe: And it seems cleare to us, that neither their abode at *Ephesus* and *Crete* was for any long time, nor so intended by the Apostle, for he imployes them there upon occasionall businells, and expresseth himselfe in such manner, (*I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some, that they teach no other Doctrine.* *1 Timothy* 13. For this cause left I thee in *Crete*, *Titus* 1. 5. As doth not carry the fixing or constituting of a Bishop in a place as a perpetuall Governor: And it is as manifest, that they were both of them called away from these places, *2 Tim.* 4. 9. Do thy diligence to come to me shortly, *Titus*, 3. 12. Be diligent, to come to me to *Nicapolis*; so that they may as well be called Bishops of other Citie, or Church where they had any considerable abode, as they are pretended to have beene of *Ephesus* and *Crete*, as they are called by the Postscripts of these Apostles, the credit of which Postscripts we cannot build upon in this point.

Secondly, to that of the Angels of the Churches, the Ministers of the Churches are called Stars and Angels, which Denominations are Metaphoricall and a Mystery, *Revel.* 1. 20. The Mystery of the seven Starres, Angells in respect of their mission

or sending; Stars in respect of their station and shining. And it is
 strange to us, that so many expresse testimonies of Scriptures, and al-
 legoricall denominations or mysteries should be opposed; These Angels
 being no where called Bishops in vulgar acceptation, nor the word Bi-
 shop vsed in any of *Johns* writings, who calls himself Presbiter, nor any
 mention of superiority of one Presbiter to another, but in *Diotrophes*
 effecting it. And as to that which may be said that Epistles are directed
 to one; We answer that an number of persons are in the mysterious
 and Prophetique writings exprest in singulars. And we humbly con-
 ceive that being written in an Epistolary stile (for they are as Letters or
 Epistles to the Churches) these writings are directed as Letters to col-
 lective or representative bodies use to be; that is to one, but are intended
 and meant to the body in meeting assembled: which that they were so
 intended, is cleare to us, both because there were in *Ephesus* Bishops,
 and Presbiters one and the same, to whom the Apostle at his farewell
 commended the Government of the Church, and by diuers expressions
 in these Epistles, as *Revel. 2. 24. To you and to the rest in Thyatira*, by
 which distinction of you and the rest, we conceive the Church-govern-
 ments (which were more then one) and the people to be signified, and
 so cannot consent that any singular person had majority over the rest,
 or sole power of exercising Church censures and Government spoken
 of in these Chapters.

Having thus (as we humbly conceive) proved by pregnant places of
 Scripture compared together, that the Apostles themselves did not in-
 stitute or practise Episcopall Government, nor commit and derive it to
 particular persons as their substitutes or successors therein. We shall
 in further discharge of our duty to, and for, the more cleere and full sa-
 tisfaction of your Majesty in this point, briefly declare into what Offi-
 cers hands, the ordinary and standing offices of the Church were trans-
 mitted and derived by, and from the Apostles. The Apostles had no
 Successors in *eundem gradum*: The Apostolicall office was not derived
 by succession, being instituted by Christ, by extraordinary and speciall
 commission; but for the ordinary and standing use and service of the
 Church, there were ordained only two orders of offices, *viz.* Bishops
 and Deacons, which the Apostle expresth, *Phil. 1. 1. To all the Saints
 in Christ Jesus which are at Ephesus, with the Bishops and Deacons*; And
 only of them doth the Apostle give the due characters of Officers; *1
 Tim. 3. 1. 8.* From both which places of Scripture we conclude with

ancient Expositors both Greeke and Latine, that Bishops are the same with Presbiters, and besides Presbiters, there is no mention of any other Order, but that of Deacons; of both which Orders there were in the Apostles times, in one City more then one, as in *Philippi* and *Ephesus*. And we humbly offer to your Majesty as observable; That though one order might be superiour to another order, yet in the same order of Officers, there was not any one superiour to others of the same order; No Apostle was above an Apostle, no Evangelist above an Evangelist, no Presbiter above a Presbiter, no Deacon above a Deacon : And so we conclude this part, that since Church Officers are instituted and set in the Church by God, or Christ Jesus ; And that Ordination by or in which the Office is conveyed, is of no other Officers but of Presbyters and Deacons ; therefore there are no other orders of ordinary and standing Officers in the Churches of Christ.

As for the ages immediately succeeding the Apostles, we answer,

First, Our faith reacheth no further then the holy Scriptures; no humane testimony can beget any more then an humane faith.

Secondly, We answer, that it is agreed upon by learned men, as well such as contend for Episcopacy as others; that the times immediately succeeding the Apostles, are very darke in respect of the History of the Church.

Thirdly, That the most unquestionable record of those times, gives cleare testimony to our assertion, viz. The Epistle of *Clement* to the Corinthians, who reciting the Order of Church Officers, expressly limits them to two Bishops, and Deacons; And they whom in one place he call'd Bishops, he alwaies afterwards nameth Presbyters. The Epistles of *Ignatius* pretend indeed to the next Antiquity, but are by some suspected as wholly spurious, and proved by *Videliu* to be so mixed, that it is hard if not impossible to know what parts of them are genuine. Besides Bishop *Usher* in his last observations on them: Cap 18. Page, 238. confesseth that of the twelve of his epistles, six are counterfeited, the other six mixt, and none of them in every respect accompted sincere and genuine.

Fourthly, We grant that not long after the Apostles times, Bishops in some superiority to Presbiters, are by the writers of those times reported to be in the Church, but they were set up not as a Divine Institution, but as an Ecclesiasticall, (as afterwards both Arch-Bishops and Patriarkes were,) which is cleare by Doctor *Reynolds* his Epistle to Sir *Francis*.

Francis Knowles, wherein he shewes out of *Bishop Jewell*, that *Ambrose*, *Chrysostome*, *Jerome*, *Augustine*, and many more holy Fathers together with the Apostle *Paul*, agree that by the word of God there is no difference between a Presbyter and a Bishop; And that *Medina* in the Councell of *Trent* affirms not only the same Fathers, but also another *Jerome*; *Theodoret*, *Primasius*, *Sedulius*, and *Theophilact*, to be of the same judgement: and that with them agreed *Oecumenius*, *Anselme* Arch-Bishop of Canturbury, and another *Anselme*; *Gregory* and *Gratian*, and after them many others; that it was inrol'd in the Canon Law for sound and catholique doctrine, and publicly taught by learned men, and adds, that all who have laboured in the reformation of the Church for these five hundred yeeres, have taught that all Pastors, be they instituted Bishops or Priests, have equall authority and power by Gods word. The same way goes *Lumbard* Master of the sentences, and Father of the Schoole-men, who speaking of Presbyters and Deacons, saith the Primitive Churches had those Orders only; and that we have the Apostles precept for them alone; with him agree many of the most eminent of that kinde, and generally all the Canonists; to these we may adde *Sextus Senensis*, who testifies for himselfe and many others, and *Cassander* who was called by one of the Germane Emperours, as one of singular ability and integrity, to informe him and resolve his conscience in questions of that nature, who saies it is agreed among all in the Apostles times, there was no difference betwixt a Bishop and a Presbyter.

For a conclusion we adde, that the doctrine which we have herein propounded to your Majesty concerning the identity of the Order of Bishops and Presbiters, is no other then the Doctrine published by King *Henry* the eight, 1543. For all his Subjects to receive, seen and allowed by the Lords both Spirituall and Temporall, with the nether House of Parliament: of these two Orders only (so saith his Booke.) that is to say, Priests and Deacons; the Scripture maketh expresse mention, and how they were confer'd of by the Apostles by prayer, and imposition of their hands; by all which it seems evident that the order of Episcopacie, as distinct from Presbiters, is but an Ecclesiasticall Institution, and therefore not unalterable.

Lastly we answer, that that Episcopall Government which at first obtained in the Church did really and substantially differ from Episcopall Government, which the Honourable Houses of Parliament

desire the abolition of. The Bishop of these times was one presiding in, and joyning with the Presbytery of his Church ruling with them, and not without them, either created and made by the Presbiters choosing out one among themselves, as in *Rome* and *Alexandria*, or chosen by the Church, and confirmed by three or more of his neighbours of like dignity within the same precinct. Lesser Townes and Villages had and might have had Bishops in them as well as populous and eminent Cities, untill the Councell of *Sardin* decreed that Villages and small Cities should have no Bishops, least the name and authority of a Bishop might thereby come into contempt; but of one claiming as his due and right to himselfe alone, as a Superiour order or degree, all power about Ordination of Presbiters and Deacons, and all jurisdictions either to exercise himselfe, or deligate to whom he will of the Laity or Clergy, as they distinguish according to the judgement and practice of these in our times; we reade not till the latter and corrupter ages of the Church.

By all which it appeares, that the present Hierarchy, (the abolition whereof is desired by the Honourable Houses may accordingly be abolished,) and yet possibly the Bishops of these Primitive times might be, they are so far differing one from another.

In answer to that part of your Majesties Paper, wherein you inquire whether our Saviour and his Apostles did so leave the Church at liberty, as they might totally alter or change the Church-government at their pleasure; we humbly conceive, that there are substantials belonging to Church-government, such are appointed by Christ and his Apostles, which are not in the Churches liberty to alter at pleasure: But as for Arch-Bishops &c. we hope it will appeare unto your Majesties conscience, that they are none of the Church Governments appointed by our Saviour and his Apostles; we beseech your Majesty, rather to looke to the originall of them then Succession.

FINIS.